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ABSTRACT

Drawing from research conducted by the Academy for Educational Development and the College Board, this booklet presents nine recommendations to enhance the transfer function of community colleges, especially for minority students; provides a rationale for the recommendations; and describes two major programs to promote the transfer function. Chapter 1 sets forth the following recommendations: (1) the transfer function should be the central role of community colleges; (2) the culture of the urban community college should emphasize intellectual rigor and critical thinking; (3) urban community colleges must promote a vibrant on-campus community, especially for minority students; (4) dual admissions programs should be established; (5) databases using common definitions of "transfer" and "transfer student" should be established; (6) community colleges should aggressively promote their upgraded transfer programs among high school students and staff; (7) each state should offer financial incentives to reward community colleges with successful transfer programs; (8) a federally funded scholarship for low-income students who transfer should be created; and (9) not-for-profit foundations should establish programs to enhance transfer rates. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the changing transfer function in community colleges, offering data on the percentages of students who wish to transfer, who actually do transfer, and who receive bachelor's degrees. In addition, student-centered, institutional, social, and political factors that have had a negative effect on transfer rates are examined. Chapter 3 describes and reviews the achievements of the Upper Division Scholarship Program, which was initiated by the Ford Foundation to facilitate the transfer of academically well qualified, but economically disadvantaged, minority students; and finally, chapter 4 provides an overview of the Urban Community Colleges Transfer Opportunities Program, a two-phase program to help selected community colleges improve minority transfer rates. In each of these chapters, conclusions drawn from the successes of the projects are presented. Includes 36 references. (AYC)

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BRIDGES TO OPPORTUNITY

Are Community Colleges Meeting the Transfer Needs of Minority Students?

Fred L. Pincus
and
Elayne Archer

ACADEMY FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND
COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION BOARD

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Foreword

As we near the twenty-first century, the lack of educational opportunity for the poor is the most important problem facing education in the United States. Countless studies and reports have shown that, with few exceptions, the poor are less well educated than the rest of society and are therefore unable to enter the economic and social mainstream. This not only poses moral and philosophical problems, but it is also directly tied to the United States' inability to compete in the increasingly competitive international economy, to our lowered domestic economic output, and to aspects of social instability. A particularly troublesome facet of the problem is the relationship between poverty and race: because blacks, Hispanics, and native Americans are disproportionately poor, they are much harder hit by the inequitable distribution of educational benefits, exacerbating an already complex and sensitive racial situation.

The problem has taken on added importance in the last several years. After substantial progress was made in the 1970s, it appears that a marked slippage has occurred in the 1980s. This phenomenon has not gone unnoticed, and the issue is now a major point of discussion in all serious examinations of educational issues in the United States. It forms a subtext to all components of education — testing, financial aid, curriculum, admissions, teaching, guidance, and counseling — and has become a subject unto itself.

A critical component of the educational system are the two-year colleges, which have a particularly important role to play in the equity equation. They have pioneered many aspects of higher education for minorities and the poor; they have opened their doors to many who have not been offered educational opportunity at four-year institutions; they are a major transition point from the high school degree to a bachelor's degree. No other part of the education system has made its commitment to equity more explicit or more defined.

Because two-year colleges have accepted the challenge, they have been the subject of scrutiny from other parts of the education system.

At the same time, they have carved out a critical role for themselves as the nation looks at how best to include those who have traditionally been underrepresented in the realm of higher education.

This publication is dedicated to the two-year colleges who have led the way for the remainder of the system. Its purpose is to stimulate discussion on how best to take up the challenge that they have offered the high schools and four-year colleges. Most of all, however, the points made herein are meant to encourage educators to talk to one another, understand one another, and work with one another.

The Academy for Educational Development and the College Board are deeply concerned and troubled by educational inequity, and both have significant efforts under way that are intended to improve equity. We hope this publication serves that end.

Donald M. Stewart
President
The College Board

Stephen F. Moseley
President
Academy for Educational Development

CHAPTER 1

Enhancing the Community College Transfer Function

The transfer function of community colleges is in crisis. Transfer rates vary considerably among the states, and limited data make generalizations difficult. Nevertheless, educators agree that for a variety of reasons, a relatively small percentage of community college students transfers to four-year schools and an even smaller percentage gets bachelor's degrees. Furthermore, these numbers have been decreasing, and the transfer rates of black, Hispanic, and native American students are lower than the rates for white and Asian American students. These trends force us to question the degree to which community colleges presently provide channels of upward mobility for minority and low-income students and to ask what can be done by community colleges and by the rest of the higher education community.

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) and other community college leaders correctly conclude that those who attend a community college tend to be economically better off after attendance than those who attend no college. However, it is equally true that those who attain bachelor's degrees have better jobs and higher incomes than those who stop their education with an associate degree or vocational certificate from a community college. A recent federal government report, for example, shows that the average annual income of individuals with bachelor's degrees is almost $6,000 higher than those with associate degrees and $7,464 higher than those with vocational certificates (Current Population Reports 1987). Low transfer rates, especially among low-income and minority students, limit the ability of community colleges to provide paths of upward mobility.

No other institutions take on the awesome task of working to salvage hope for so many who have been given up on by others. The issue is not only poor academic skills, but also self-image, motivation, and home and financial problems.

We believe nonetheless that community colleges have the potential to better serve the interests of low-income and minority students in urban areas. Community colleges welcome nontraditional students and provide extensive remedial services to those who need them. More importantly, they convey to these students that they are interested in them. Community colleges offer the only hope for many urban students to gain access to higher education.

The Academy for Educational Development (AED), in cooperation with the College Board, has been studying the transfer function of community colleges for several years. We have conducted a follow-up study of 535 recipients of the Ford Foundation's Upper Division Scholarships, all of whom transferred from a community college to a four-year college between 1971 and 1975. We have also conducted evaluations of 24 institutions that received grants from Ford's Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program (TOP).

From the conclusions of this research, we have formulated nine recommendations to enhance the transfer function of community colleges, especially for minority students. Some of these recommendations are controversial, while others will find broad agreement. Some can be acted upon by individual colleges, while others require action by the state and/or federal governments. All the recommendations, however, must be implemented if minority transfer rates are to be increased significantly.

The rationale for our recommendations can be found in chapters 2 to 4. In chapter 2, we present an overview of the transfer function and offer several different explanations for low transfer rates. In chapters 3 and 4, we discuss the effects of two major programs funded by the Ford Foundation to promote the transfer function — the Upper Division Scholarship Program and the Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program. Our research findings are presented in a nontechnical manner with a minimum of statistics and a small bibliography. Information on how to order the full research reports is provided at the back of this publication.

RECOMMENDATION 1: *The transfer function should be the central role of community colleges.*

Prior to the 1960s, when the junior college population was predominantly white, male, and middle class, prebaccalaureate education was the primary role of two-year colleges. We believe that low-income and minority students, both male and female, deserve the same opportunities today. With the dramatic expansion of postsecondary vocational education during the past two decades, the urban community colleges are at a crossroads. If they want to maintain their collegiate status and better serve urban students, urban community colleges must give primacy to the transfer function without abandoning their other functions. Strong prebaccalaureate programs should be the foundation upon which vocational, adult, and continuing education programs are developed.

Community college administrators, faculty, and counselors should actively promote the transfer option by emphasizing both the intellectual and economic benefits of attaining the bachelor's degree. Every community college student, for example, should know the income differentials between bachelor degree and associate degree recipients. Occupational programs should be structured so that as many credits as possible can be transferred to four-year schools.

Four-year colleges should be encouraged to adopt policies (such as those in place in Florida) that approach the transfer function on the basis of what is good for students rather than what is good for institutions. A special transfer office and a wide range of support services, including well-funded and effective remedial programs, should exist on every urban community college campus in the country. This is the base upon which adult and continuing education programs and contract training should be developed.

RECOMMENDATION 2: *The culture of the urban community college should be transformed to emphasize intellectual rigor and critical thinking.*

The curriculum of urban community colleges has often not been sufficiently challenging. The regurgitation of isolated facts on so-called objective tests has replaced real writing and critical thinking on a wide array of intellectual issues. However, we do not agree with those who call for a return to a core curriculum based on narrow,

traditional definitions of the great texts of western civilization. Neither do we agree with those who call for a quantum leap in standardized testing, either at entrance or exit.

The curriculum should reflect the diversity of human knowledge by including the experiences of people of color and women. All community college students should know the political ideas of Gandhi and Plato, and the literature of Toni Morrison and William Shakespeare. Engineering technology students need to understand and be able to write about both the elementary laws of physics and the significance of the disastrous chemical leak in Bhophal, India. Secretarial science students need to learn the techniques of word processing and be able to use these techniques to write clearly and creatively.

This broad education cannot be accomplished unless those community colleges that have not already acted take a different approach to their curriculum. Furthermore, the faculty must play a greater role in promoting the transfer function. To begin the process of changing their intellectual orientation, community colleges might consider requiring that at least 25 percent of a student's grade in any course carrying transfer credit be based upon writing assignments involving some degree of critical thinking. To be publicly accountable, community colleges must demonstrate that their curriculum is both intellectually rigorous and culturally diverse.

RECOMMENDATION 3: *Urban community colleges must aggressively promote the development of a vibrant on-campus community, especially for minority students.*

Social alienation has been all too common at both community and four-year colleges. Our research and that of others demonstrates that those students who are socially integrated into the life of the college are the most likely to transfer and earn a bachelor's degree. Administrators at community colleges must aggressively promote the formation of formal student organizations, informal support groups, and a wide array of cultural and social events on campus. Social contacts between community and four-year college students are also important. Four-year colleges should arrange support groups for new minority transfer students that go beyond perfunctory orientations and should insure the availability of on-campus housing. High quality child care would enable single parents to participate in the life of both

community and four-year colleges. Social contacts at the college are critical for encouraging student retention and graduation, even for the academically well-prepared community college students we studied in the Upper Division Scholarship Program.

RECOMMENDATION 4: *Dual admissions programs should be established so that any student who completes an approved associate degree program (1) will be guaranteed admission with junior status to any public four-year institution in their state and (2) will not be required to repeat any course taken in the community college.*

Our research and that of others has shown that the loss of credit upon transfer decreases the likelihood of a student completing the bachelor's degree. Although articulation agreements are proliferating, their mere existence is not sufficient. Many are simply paper agreements but they make it appear that community and four-year colleges are trying to promote transfer. It is essential to close the loopholes that presently exist in such articulation agreements and transform them into meaningful documents.

We believe that it is necessary to put some teeth into articulation agreements. Community college students should have a guarantee that if they successfully complete an approved prebaccalaureate associate degree program, they will be admitted to any public four-year institution in their state. In addition, they should not have to repeat any prebaccalaureate course that they completed at the community college. This would increase student motivation to transfer and eliminate the problem of credit loss upon transfer.

RECOMMENDATION 5: *Data bases should be established at all community colleges and a common definition of "transfer" and "transfer student" should be agreed upon.*

The only way to evaluate the transfer function of community colleges generally as well as on individual campuses is through the establishment of effective data bases. In this way, potential students can be identified and tracked while in community college and followed up if

they transfer to a four-year college. For a variety of reasons, most community colleges have been less than diligent in tracking their students, and four-year colleges have often been unwilling and/or unable to provide community colleges with the needed information. The data bases that do exist are often designed for collecting and reporting enrollment figures rather than for supporting the development of broader educational policy goals.

States should establish some mechanism so that community colleges receive data on those students who transfer to four-year colleges. One method would be to set up a statewide data base for all public postsecondary institutions, as has been done in Florida and New Jersey. An alternate means would be to require four-year institutions to inform community colleges of the matriculation status and academic progress of transfer students.

Since different community college districts use different definitions of transfer, it has been impossible to compare transfer rates accurately across schools and districts. Furthermore, when a particular district changes its definition, it becomes difficult to track results in one district over time. These problems could be mitigated if community colleges across the country would agree on a single definition of transfer. The entire higher education community must be involved if effective data bases are to be established.

RECOMMENDATION 6: ***After upgrading the transfer curriculums, community colleges should aggressively promote their prebaccalaureate programs among high school students, teachers, counselors, and administrators.***

High schools are still a major source of students for all levels of higher education. Community colleges have begun to promote their vocational and technical programs in high schools through the AACJC's "two-plus-two" policy, but they have done much less with regard to the prebaccalaureate curriculum. Under the two-plus-two policy, students take specified courses during their last two years of high school that will prepare them to enter a specified associate degree program in the community college. The two-plus-two model should be broadened to include transfer. Advanced placement options should be expanded and faculty/counselor exchanges between high schools and

community colleges should be promoted. Community colleges must help to create a "protransfer" climate in high schools in order to expand their prebaccalaureate enrollments.

RECOMMENDATION 7: *Each state should develop a set of financial incentives to reward community colleges which have successful transfer programs.*

In some states during the past two decades the majority of community college funds has gone into vocational and continuing education and contract training. The establishment of appropriate financial incentives would help community colleges upgrade their transfer programs. One specific strategy would be to develop a transfer bounty whereby a community college would get a lump sum for each student who transfers to a four-year college and completes 12 or more credits with a C average or better. Making the bounty contingent upon the completion one semester in good academic standing would ensure that the community college transfer policies are being responsibly implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 8: A *special federally funded scholarship program for low-income students who transfer to four-year colleges should be established.*

Our research has shown that the Ford Foundation's Upper Division Scholarship Program was successful. Most undergraduate scholarships are four-year packages that start in the freshman year. We believe special scholarships for transfer students should be developed that begin in the junior year. The federal and/or state governments should revive the Upper Division Scholarship Program by guaranteeing a full scholarship, equivalent to the cost of tuition, books, and living expenses at any in-state, public, four-year institution, to any low-income student with an associate degree and a C average. This would provide incentives for entering community college students to consider the transfer option and make it easier for those who earn the associate degree to attend a four-year school.

RECOMMENDATION 9: *Not-for-profit foundations should establish programs that would enhance transfer rates.*

If the philanthropic community is genuinely interested in access to and diversity in higher education, it must address the issue of community college transfer programs. Not-for-profits could develop a wide variety of programs. Using the TOP model, foundation support could expand the number of schools attempting to create better support services and more stimulating campus environments for transfer-oriented minority students. Similar programs at four-year institutions could be geared toward integrating minority transfer students into campus social and academic life. Community and local foundations could also help community colleges set up daycare centers and establish more comprehensive data bases. Finally, foundations might experiment with more unorthodox programs such as giving cash awards to community colleges with transfer rates that exceed 50 percent.

We believe that implementing these recommendations would increase the percentage of community college students who are interested in transfer and the percentage who actually do transfer. If this occurred, the potential of community colleges to provide more effective channels for upward mobility would be greatly enhanced.

CHAPTER 2

The Changing Transfer Function in Community Colleges

By the mid-1980s, some educators and policymakers had grown concerned about the weakened transfer function of community colleges. Yet, given the nature of community colleges, bringing together statistical findings about transfer is no easy task. There is widespread disagreement about who should be regarded as a transfer student and about how transfer rates should be calculated. Added to these problems, data bases maintained by community colleges are often inadequate.

Educators and policymakers cannot agree on why transfer rates are so low. Some blame the poor academic skills and disadvantaged backgrounds of the students, while others focus on institutional practices and barriers at both community colleges and four-year institutions. Before discussing our research on the two Ford Foundation programs designed to help promote minority student transfer from community to four-year colleges, we want to provide some background on the community college transfer function.

An Empirical Approach to Transfer

There is a great deal of empirical information about the community college transfer function, although much of it has severe limitations due to its lack of methodological rigor and limited scope. In spite of

these difficulties, we can draw some tentative conclusions from the available data.

What Percentage of Students Wants to Transfer?

This is the key question. If only a minority of students wants to transfer, low transfer rates would not necessarily be a problem. If, on the other hand, a majority wants to transfer, low transfer rates must be viewed more critically.

Educators agree that there are fewer community college students enrolled in transfer courses and more enrolled in vocational courses in the 1980s than there were in the 1960s. According to the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, only 16 percent of community college students were enrolled in vocational programs in 1965: most of the rest were enrolled in transfer programs. By 1976, half of the students were enrolled in vocational courses and the remainder were enrolled in either transfer courses or general education courses. During the 1980s, the AACJC stopped classifying students as transfer or vocational students because the distinction was seen as "outmoded." Student intentions were said to be more important than the types of courses in which they were enrolled.

There seems to be general agreement that during the 1960s, at least two-thirds of community college students intended to transfer to a four-year school in order to obtain a B.A. (Cohen and Brawer 1987; Medsker and Tillery 1971). During the 1980s, the findings depend upon both the data base that is used and the questions that are asked. Alexander Astin's recent annual surveys (no date) have shown that three-quarters of first-time freshmen in public community colleges say that they aspire to a B.A. This study, however, includes only full-time students who are younger and more likely to want to transfer.

In an unpublished national survey of both full-time and part-time community college students enrolled in credit courses, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges (Palmer 1988) found that 36 percent said their "primary reason for enrolling in this college at this time" was to prepare to transfer to a four-year college. Half of the students said their primary reason was "gaining occupational skills," but the majority of these students also said they intended to get a B.A. This

means that at least another 25 percent of the students are potential transfers, bringing the total to more than 60 percent.

In a recent study of 24 predominantly minority community colleges, Cohen, Brawer, and Bensimon (1985) found that almost three-quarters of the students said they wanted a bachelor's degree. Among these students, there were no white-minority differences. Fifty-three percent said that "preparation for transfer" was their primary reason for enrolling in a community college. Asian Americans and Hispanics were the most likely to cite the transfer option (70 percent and 63 percent, respectively), while whites and blacks were the least likely (48 percent and 45 percent, respectively).

Given these findings, we may draw some tentative conclusions about community college students' desires to transfer:

1. In the 1980s, three-quarters of the students say they want a bachelor's degree.
2. One-third to one-half say that preparation for transfer is the main reason that they enrolled in a community college.
3. White-minority differences in transfer aspirations are inconsistent, although it is likely that Asian Americans have higher aspirations than other groups.
4. The percentage of students who say that preparation for transfer is their primary reason for enrolling in a community college has probably declined since the 1960s.

What Percentage Actually Transfers to Four-Year Schools?

Medsker and Tillery (1971) estimated that during the 1960s, one-third of all entering students and one-half of all transfer-oriented students eventually transferred to a four-year school. Karabel (1972) gave a somewhat lower estimate of the transfer rate of all entering students —25-30 percent.

At least two studies based on the National Longitudinal Study of 1972 High School Graduates showed even lower transfer rates. Peng (1977) found that 24.4 percent of those who entered a community college in 1972 had transferred to a four-year college by 1974. Whites had higher transfer rates (26.1 percent) than blacks (17.9 percent) or

Hispanics (9.1 percent). Adelman (1988) looked at all 1972 high school graduates who had entered a community college between 1972 and 1984 and found that 21.2 percent had transferred to a four-year school.

Several California studies are also worth reporting since that state accounts for one-quarter of all community college students in the country. Karabel (1986) reports that between 1971 and 1973, 13.8 percent of community college students transferred to a public four-year school in the state. By the 1981 to 1983 period, that figure had dropped to 11.4 percent. He also reports that blacks and Hispanics are underrepresented among community college transfers in the 1980s. Bernstein (1986) cites declining transfer rates in six other states — Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Washington.

Sheldon (no date) conducted a three-year longitudinal study of students who initially enrolled in 15 community colleges in California in 1978. He found that 18.9 percent of the transfer-oriented students had entered four-year schools, while another 29.6 percent were still enrolled in a two-year school. This longitudinal study is particularly interesting because the transfer-oriented students were divided into four categories:

- *Full-time* — could have entered four-year school, enrolled full-time, wanted to transfer, and was taking sequence of courses;
- *Technical* — same as above, but enrolled in high-status occupational program;
- *Part-time* — same as above, but enrolled part-time;
- *Undisciplined* — wanted to transfer, but had poor skills and was not taking sequence of courses.

Not surprisingly, Sheldon found that the transfer rate among the full-time students was the highest (32.1 percent), followed by the part-time (19.0 percent), technical (16.1 percent), and undisciplined students (7.5 percent). About one-third of the students were still enrolled in the community college. Black and Hispanic students were overrepresented among the "undisciplined" students and underrepresented among the "full-time" students. Asian American students were overrepresented in both categories.[1]

1. The base for this statement is the race/ethnic distribution for *all* community college students enrolled in the 15 institutions.

Two citywide studies have also been conducted. Alba and Lavin (1981) found that only 25 percent of the students who had entered a community college of the City University of New York (CUNY) system had transferred to a four-year school within five years. Orfield (1984) found that only 12.5 percent of prebaccalaureate community college students in Chicago transferred to a four-year school.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these findings:

1. The transfer rate appears to have declined since the 1960s and early 1970s, although the extent of the decline is not clear.
2. The current transfer rate is 15-25 percent of all community college students and 20-30 percent of those students who say they want to transfer.
3. Whites and probably Asians are more likely to transfer than blacks and Hispanics.
4. Transfer rates are highly variable both among and within different community college systems.

What Percentage of Community College Students Receives Bachelor's Degrees?

The most recent data to address this question are found in "High School and Beyond," a study of high school seniors who enrolled as full-time community college students in fall 1980 (Carroll 1989). By the spring of 1986, five and one-half years after high school graduation, 19.9 percent of the whites had earned a bachelor's degree, compared to only 9.1 percent of the blacks and 8.5 percent of the Hispanics.

Three studies using the National Longitudinal Study of 1972 high school graduates have also addressed this question. Breneman and Nelson (1981) found that 10.8 percent of the students who had entered a community college had received a B.A. degree four and one-half years later. Sixteen percent of those who had entered an academic program had earned a bachelor's degree compared to only 3 percent of those who had entered an occupational program. Velez (1985) found that by 1979, 31 percent of the NLS students who had entered academic programs had received bachelor's degrees. Adelman (1988) found that only 11.5 percent of all NLS students had earned B.A. degrees by 1985.

Analyzing a data base of freshmen entering community college in 1971 who aspired to the B.A., Astin (1982) found racial differences in degree attainment by 1980. Twenty-nine percent of the white students had earned a B.A., compared to 27 percent of the Puerto Rican, 24 percent of the black, and 20 percent of other Hispanic students.

Several studies have compared the B.A. attainment rates of students who initially entered two-year colleges with those who initially entered four-year colleges in the early 1970s. The High School and Beyond study mentioned previously showed that whites who entered public, four-year institutions were almost two-and-a-half times as likely to have earned a bachelor's degree than comparable community college students. Black and Hispanic students who entered four-year colleges were three times more likely to have earned a bachelor's degree than their community college counterparts. Unfortunately, there were no statistical controls for educational aspiration or academic skill.

Breneman and Nelson (1981) found that 44 percent of the NLS students who entered four-year colleges had received a bachelor's degree compared to only 16 percent of those who entered academic programs at two-year colleges. After controlling for background variables and level of academic skill, the four-year students still had a 13 percent advantage. The data show that the more academically qualified students have a better chance of getting a B.A. if they enter a four-year school, while less qualified students are more academically successful at a community college (also see Nunley and Breneman 1988).

In the Velez (1985) study mentioned previously, 79 percent of the four-year entrants had earned a B.A. by 1979, compared to only 31 percent of those who entered academic programs at two-year colleges — a difference of 48 percent. After controlling for background variables and levels of academic skill, the four-year entrants still had an advantage of 18.7 percent.

Alba and Lavin (1981) looked at a specific group of students who entered CUNY in 1970 — they had high school averages of less than 80, they aspired to a bachelor's degree, and they wanted to attend a four-year school as freshmen. Some were admitted to four-year schools and others were admitted to two-year schools even though their demographic and academic characteristics were similar. By 1975, 31.2 percent of the four-year entrants had gotten B.A.'s or were still enrolled in a four-year school, compared to only 12.8 percent of the two-year entrants. The four-year students had an advantage, even after

controlling for high school performance. In this study, minority status did not emerge as an important factor.

Lavin, Murtha, Kaufman, and Hyllegard (1986) looked at the educational attainment of three cohorts entering CUNY between 1970 and 1972. By 1984, 12 to 14 years after entering CUNY, 76 percent of the regularly admitted four-year students and 35 percent of the regularly admitted two-year students had received a B.A. Of the open admissions students, i.e., those who did not meet the regular admissions standards, 42 percent of the four-year students and 23 percent of the two-year students had earned a B.A. In each category, whites were the most likely to get a B.A., Hispanics were the least likely, and blacks fell in between. In this study, the authors did not control for educational aspiration or academic skill.

Several tentative conclusions can be drawn from these findings:

1. Only 10-15 percent of all community college students ever receive a B.A.
2. No more than 20-25 percent of community college students who aspire to a B.A. ever receive one.
3. White community college students are more likely to earn a B.A. than black and Hispanic students.
4. Students who want a B.A. and enter a two-year college have a smaller chance of getting the degree than comparable students who enter a four-year college.
5. There is a high degree of regional variation in the percentage of community college students receiving B.A.'s.

Why Are Transfer Rates So Low?

Three types of explanations are offered for the relatively low transfer rates. One set of explanations, often proposed by community college supporters, looks at student characteristics as the main cause. A second set of explanations, usually put forth by critics, targets the characteristics of the community colleges themselves. A final set of explanations examines the larger political and socioeconomic environment as a contributing factor. As we will demonstrate, all three explanatory levels must be examined to fully understand the relatively low transfer rates.

Student-Centered Explanations

Goals. Many community college supporters argue that the low transfer rates are not problematic since only a small percentage of community college students actually wants to transfer. It is inappropriate, they hold, to use *all* community college students as the base upon which to calculate transfer rates.

The data pertaining to this issue are far from clear. As was discussed earlier, three-quarters of community college students say they want at least a bachelor's degree and one-third to one-half say their primary reason for enrolling in a community college is preparation for transfer. Upon leaving community college, however, most students say they have fulfilled their educational goals even though they have neither transferred nor completed any community college program.

Which of these measures is the "true" measure of a student's desire to transfer? Although the answer to this question remains elusive, many community college supporters are too quick to accept the lowest possible numbers. Yet, even when transfer-oriented students are taken as the base, fewer than one-third actually transfer. The explanation of low transfer rates focusing on student goals does not provide an adequate approach for understanding the data.

Skills. A second student-centered explanation focuses on the poorer academic skills held by two-year as compared to four-year college students. The skill difference between these two groups of students is well documented, and it is not unreasonable to expect that, other things being equal, students who read and write poorly will be less likely to transfer than those who read and write well.

Yet the skills explanation by itself is not sufficient since the level of academic skills at entrance should not be taken as a "given." First, if remedial programs were more effective, differences in academic skills would be less important. Second, several studies mentioned previously show that even after controlling for academic skill, community college students are less academically successful than four-year students. This is especially true for the more highly skilled students.

Finally, institutional survival skills may be almost as important as academic skills. Cohen, Brawer, and Bensimon (1985) measured transfer-oriented behavior among community college students. This category included knowing which of their courses carried transfer credit and where to get information about transfer, and actually re-

questing that information. While over half of the students expressed positive attitudes toward transfer, only 17 percent exhibited high levels of transfer-oriented behavior. The attitude-behavior gap was greater among black and Hispanic students than among white and Asian American students.

Presumably, these institutional survival skills are more learnable than traditional academic skills. Good counseling, transfer workshops, and informal peer support groups would undoubtedly promote transfer-oriented behavior. Blame for students' lack of knowledge should be laid not only on students but also on institutions.

Other Characteristics. Certain student characteristics are negatively associated with academic success and transferring, such as being black or Hispanic, low income or older, enrolled part-time and having limited involvement with the college. Since community college students increasingly fit the profile of those least likely to transfer, the student-centered explanation focuses on these characteristics to explain why transfer rates are going down.

While these empirical trends are accurate, they are not an adequate explanation for low transfer rates. The low transfer rates for low-income and minority students, for example, are probably caused by a combination of poor skills and problems paying for college. Yet we have already seen that the skills explanation is not adequate in and of itself. And while financial problems do affect transfer negatively, this is an indictment of the student aid system rather than a student-centered explanation of low transfer rates. Among part-time students, low transfer rates are also related to financial problems, as well as to age and to family responsibilities.

Clearly, student-centered explanations of low transfer rates are, at best, only part of the answer. Used alone, they constitute a blame-the-victim approach to explaining why relatively few community college students transfer to four-year schools.

Institutional Explanations

Institutional Priorities. There is widespread agreement, among both supporters and critics of community colleges, that the transfer function is no longer the top priority of community college administrators. Explanations for the decreased emphasis on the transfer function are

wide-ranging — student demand, labor-market requirements, funding, institutional identity, and the like.

Regardless of the causes, the declining emphasis on transfer has several consequences that work to create less student interest in transfer and less actual transfer. For example, catalogs and other promotional material devote less space to transfer information. Richardson and Bender (1987) provide the following anecdote:

> In one college that served a large minority clientele, a small bulletin board in an obscure corner of the counseling center displayed several dated announcements from four-year institutions . . . In more prominent locations around the center and on bulletin boards at the entrance were displayed many attractive materials on career opportunities, job placement and personal development . . . In another college a large display rack, prominently located in the counseling center, had more than sixty brightly colored brochures, each describing a different occupational program. Among the brochures was one describing a new liberal arts program designed to provide the same assistance to students interested in transferring as the others did for those pursuing career options (p. 40).

The same authors also argue that many predominantly minority urban community colleges "have educational programs that track minority students disproportionately into lower-status occupations. Concentrating occupational offerings on campuses serving the highest proportions of minorities while concurrently permitting transfer programs to decline in availability and quality approaches dangerously close to becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, minorities become vocational/technical majors because no viable alternatives are provided to them" (p. 44; also see Orfield et al. 1984).

Although not generally regarded as community college critics, Richardson and Bender conclude: "This arrangement cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as a strategy for promoting equal educational opportunity" (p. 4).

Tinto (1987) has shown that student involvement in the academic and social life of the college is positively associated with academic success. Virtually all community colleges, however, lack the residential facilities that would promote more student involvement on campus. Most community colleges also lack the wide array of student

organizations and activities that would tie students to the campus. It is likely, therefore, that these institutional aspects of community college structure prevent students from being better integrated into the college and contribute to low transfer rates (Dougherty 1987).

Other scholars have cited a number of additional institutional factors that negatively affect transfer rates, including the following:

- Sophomore courses are not always available
- Counselors promote vocational programs rather than tranfer programs
- Special services for transfer students are not always available
- Strong articulation agreements are not always sought after
- Adequate financial aid is not always available.

In other words, the institution may be discouraging prospective transfer students, knowingly or unknowingly. The community colleges not only may be failing to help potential transfer students get over existing hurdles, but they may be placing some new hurdles in the way. This may be one reason that students seem to adjust their goals downward while attending two-year institutions.

Faculty Behavior. Like administrators, community college faculty fail to see transfer as the primary institutional mission. In a study at 24 urban community colleges of faculty who teach courses that receive transfer credit, Cohen, Brawer, and Bensimon (1985) found that only 16 percent felt that transfer education was the primary community college mission. The faculty also seemed protective of the occupational function. Two-thirds said it was necessary to expand occupational programs. Fewer than one-fourth said that to strengthen transfer it would be necessary to deemphasize other missions.

The faculty who teach transfer-credit courses also seem unaware of which or how many of their students are interested in transfer. They also are not actively involved in special college programs promoting transfer education. "The noted absence of faculty contribution toward the advancement of transfer-related goals may be a manifestation of faculty awareness that in light of new institutional priorities such efforts are not only of limited value, but also contradict institutional priorities" (Cohen, Brawer, and Bensimon 1985, p. 100).

Inside the classroom, many faculty members have low expectations of their students. They emphasize learning bits of knowledge rather

than critical thinking, give quick-score objective examinations rather than essay exams, and require few outside writing assignments (Richardson, Fisk, and Okun 1983). Whether this is because of the alienation of faculty members or the hostility of low-performing students, the students have little chance of acquiring the skills they need to transfer to and succeed in four-year colleges.

In fact, a generally hostile atmosphere characterizes relations between minority students and the predominantly white administration and faculty on many community college campuses. Weis (1985) argues that faculty and administrators do not handle the culture conflict in as sensitive a manner as they might. As a result, minority students often rebel against faculty/administrative authority, engaging in self-destructive behavior that is not conducive to either transfer or learning. This conflict is exacerbated by the underrepresentation of minority faculty in most community colleges, especially in prebaccalaureate courses.

Remedial Programs. There is general agreement that remedial courses at community colleges are expanding rapidly and that these courses are not particularly successful in increasing student skills to the level needed to successfully complete college-level courses. Since minority students are more likely to need these courses than white students, they are most affected by the weaknesses of most of these courses.

Roueche, Baker, and Roueche (1985) surveyed all the higher education institutions in the country and concluded that remedial programs varied widely in terms of structure, administrative support, and effectiveness. They also identified 11 elements that the more successful remedial programs (i.e., those with retention rates of at least 50 percent) had in common. Clearly, offering more effective remedial courses represents one important strategy for increasing transfer rates for minority students.

College Costs. Another institutional factor that is often ignored is the cost of going to college. Tuition and fees are increasing every year and four-year colleges and universities continue to be more expensive than two-year colleges. During the 1980s, the cost of attending college has increased faster than income for families at all socioeconomic levels. Unfortunately, the Reagan Administration has cut student aid and replaced grants with loans. The AACJC's Urban Community Colleges Commission (1988) states:

> Given the disproportionate number of minority students at or below poverty income levels who are attending or who desire to attend urban community colleges, . . . the lack of adequate financial aid looms as one of the most formidable barriers which community colleges face, both in assuring initial access and in aiding student retention (p. 17).

Needless to say, transfer rates are also negatively affected.

Social and Political Factors

Other factors going beyond the individual student or individual college have an important effect on education in general and on the transfer function of community colleges in particular. Some of these factors have contributed to the declining transfer rates and may put constraints on reversing these trends.

The Economy. Relative to the 1960s, the American economy in the 1980s has stagnated. Real income has stopped growing and unemployment has increased. Stable, well-paying, unionized, blue-collar jobs are being replaced by lower-paying, less stable service jobs. Even many technical jobs requiring two years of community college education don't pay as well as declining jobs in traditional manufacturing industries. The laid-off steelworker, for example, who retrains as an electronics technician, is likely to take a cut in pay and work in a non-unionized job with less security.

In this atmosphere, students, especially those at the bottom of the socioeconomic spectrum, are more likely to make short-term, pragmatic educational decisions leading to immediate employment rather than longer term decisions leading to career development. Since all the evidence shows that people with bachelor's degrees earn more money and have more highly skilled jobs than those with associate and vocational degrees, this short-term thinking may work against the economic self-interest of community college students.

Another economic issue, the proper fit between what higher education produces and what the labor force needs, should also be considered. Two decades ago, prestigious study commissions like the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, and liberal foundations

like Ford and Kellogg, began to discuss the problem of "overeducation." Because of the rising aspirations of young people, colleges were producing more bachelor's degree recipients than the economy could employ in college-level jobs. What was needed instead, according to this argument, was to increase the number of people with technical expertise at the subbaccalaureate level: X-ray technicians rather than doctors, electronics technicians rather than engineers. The press began to discuss the "overeducation problem," and nationwide several public relations campaigns were launched to promote postsecondary vocational education.

This is the context in which community college vocational programs began to expand rapidly. Trying to achieve a proper fit between educational outcomes and labor force needs, of course, did not promote more transfer from two-year to four-year colleges. Precisely the opposite occurred. All this coincided with, and helped to influence, the educational decisions by many community college students, both white and minority, to enter vocational programs. Although these economic factors are, to some degree, beyond the scope of our research, they provide an important context within which the community college transfer function must be understood.

The Political Atmosphere. Influenced by a stagnating economy, the political atmosphere of the country has become more conservative. In *The Meanness Mania* (1980), published prior to the election of Ronald Reagan, Gerald Gill argued that both minorities and the disadvantaged were coming under increasing attack. The conservative Reagan Administration intensified this attack by trying to roll back civil rights legislation and regulations that had evolved since 1960. Reagan officials and their supporters in Congress, state capitals, and local governments often argued that white males were the true targets of racism, not women and minorities. The actions of the Reagan Administration created an atmosphere that was not supportive of special programs to help minorities.

To make matters worse, the Administration aimed its budget ax at educational programs in general and at educational programs to help the disadvantaged in particular. It became more difficult to qualify for student aid programs, and loans took the place of grants. Chapter I programs at the primary and postsecondary level were reduced, and only congressional action prevented more draconian cuts. The message was clear: Institutions that wanted to create special programs for minorities could not look to the federal government for help.

The educational reform movement of the 1980s, which gave primary emphasis to educational excellence, reflected the rising tide of conservatism. Some of the reports that came out during the mid-1980s did little more than pay lip service to concerns with educational equity for women and minorities. Increasingly, reformers argued that most equity issues had been solved in the 1960s and 1970s. Many argued that past concerns with equity had contributed to a decline in educational standards which, in turn, has created a less skilled labor force.

The empirical data, however, reveal a different story. Black and Hispanic enrollment in higher education peaked in the mid-1970s and then began a steady decline. Even at the peak, blacks and Hispanics were heavily underrepresented in higher education, especially at four-year colleges and universities. By the mid-1980s, the percentage of blacks and Hispanics who graduated from high school was steadily increasing, but the percentage who attended college was decreasing.

The AACJC's Urban Community Colleges Commission (1988) put it this way:

> The most important trend for all postsecondary education is that minority students *tend to lose ground at each step of the educational pipeline . . . The fundamental disparity between white participation rates and those of minority students pervades all areas of postsecondary education . . . Retention of minority students continues to be an area of significant concern,* primarily due to the fact that the lower socioeconomic status from which many such students come places them at maximum economic and social vulnerability during the college years (p. 9).

While we believe that getting a bachelor's degree is intrinsically valuable for those who desire it, we also know that the degree is economically important. More education leads to higher incomes, more highly skilled jobs, and better chances for upward mobility. In 1984, those with bachelor's degrees had mean monthly incomes of $1,831. Associate and vocational degree holders had mean monthly incomes of $1,346 and $1,219, respectively (Current Population Reports 1987). This translates into an annual income advantage for bachelor's degree holders of $5,940 over associate degree holders and $7,464 over vocational degree holders. These differences exist for both blacks and whites and both men and women. Similar results are seen

in a 1986 study of the incomes of 1980 high school graduates (Eagle et al. 1988).

Several other studies show that for students who entered community college as freshmen, earning a bachelor's degree results in a quantum leap in job skill compared to those who earned an associate degree but did not complete the B.A. (Monk-Turner 1988a, 1988b; Nunley and Breneman 1988). This is especially true for blacks.

This, then, is the context in which we developed the recommendations to promote minority transfer from community colleges to four-year colleges. In order to focus our recommendations on educational reform, we decided not to formulate recommendations addressing some of the larger social and political issues we have just discussed. We recognize, however, that these larger issues place certain constraints on improving the transfer function of community colleges. We now turn to the research upon which our recommendations are based.

CHAPTER 3

The Upper Division Scholarship Program

The Ford Foundation initiated the Upper Division Scholarship Program (UDSP) in 1971 to facilitate the transfer of academically well qualified, but economically disadvantaged, minority community college graduates to four-year colleges and universities. Through this program, which was administered by the College Board, Ford hoped to increase the number of baccalaureate degree holders among blacks, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians.

Community colleges around the country were asked to nominate outstanding minority students to receive scholarships and were allocated a certain number of scholarships based on minority enrollment at the institution. Final selections were made by the College Board and were based on the college's recommendation and the student's grade-point average. The College Board then published a list of the recipients and circulated the list to four-year colleges around the country. Since the scholarship could be used at any four-year institution to which the student could gain admittance, the four-year institution could use the list to recruit academically capable minority students and offer to supplement the scholarship.

The amount of the scholarship depended upon both the cost of attending college and the student's financial need. The actual award ranged from 20 percent to 80 percent of the cost of tuition, room, board, and books. The recipient was required to attend college full-time and to make normal progress toward the bachelor's degree in order to renew the scholarship for the second year.

There were five cohorts of UDS recipients between 1971 and 1975. College Board figures showed that 3,878 students had actually enrolled in four-year institutions under the program. By the time the

program was terminated in 1978, 63 percent of the UDS recipients had received a bachelor's degree, 4 percent were still enrolled, and 33 percent had dropped out of school.

In 1985, the Ford Foundation asked the Academy for Educational Development to conduct a follow-up study of UDS recipients to see whether the program had had a lasting effect. In January 1986, 4,268 questionnaires were mailed to all UDS recipients and runners-up who were on the five lists published by the College Board. One-third of the questionnaires were returned as undeliverable, probably because the addresses used were over 10 years old. By September 16, 1986, our cut-off date, 568 questionnaires had been returned. This represented a return rate of 13 percent of the total mailing and 20 percent of the questionnaires that, presumably, were delivered. Thirty-three of the respondents had either been runners-up or had not been able to accept the scholarship and so were excluded from the analysis. The results of the study, then, are based on the 535 scholarship winners (AED 1987b).

Even though no attempt was made to contact the nonrespondents, the demographic characteristics of our respondents were similar to the characteristics of UDS recipients as described in various College Board annual reports. Sixty percent of the respondents were black, 34 percent were Mexican American, and the rest were Puerto Rican or American Indian. Their median age was 34. Sixty-one percent of the respondents were female. Blacks and men were slightly underrepresented, while Mexican Americans and females were slightly overrepresented.

Most of the respondents came from economically disadvantaged families. Three-quarters of their parents had either blue-collar or service jobs, and fewer than 10 percent had professional or managerial jobs. Half of the respondents came from families in which neither parent graduated from high school, while fewer than 5 percent had two parents who were college graduates.

After graduating from community college, most of the respondents entered a predominantly white, public four-year college or university. Almost all of the respondents (93.5 percent) had received a bachelor's degree by 1986, and 57 percent had received an advanced degree. Two-thirds of those who had received the bachelor's degree did so within two years of transferring to a four-year college, although 7 percent took more than four years.

While we feel the UDSP was very successful, the 93.5 percent bachelor's degree rate is somewhat inflated because of the response

bias. The College Board's Final Report showed that 63 percent of all recipients and 75 percent of the 1971 cohort had received their bachelor's degree by 1978. Given these figures, we would estimate the "true" degree rate among UDS recipients to be somewhere between 80 and 85 percent. The results show that with adequate financial aid, economically disadvantaged but academically capable minority students in community colleges can successfully transfer to four-year colleges and earn a bachelor's degree.

Our respondents were also economically successful. Almost 90 percent were employed full-time. Half were employed in the public sector and only one-quarter in the private sector. Over three-quarters had professional or managerial jobs. The median 1986 salary for males was $36,665 and for females $24,759. Once again, we suspect that these occupational and salary figures are somewhat higher than the figures for all UDS recipients because of the response bias.

The relatively high proportion of public sector employment is typical of black and Hispanic professionals. One-third of the respondents were employed as educators. The median salary of the female respondents was virtually identical to the 1986 median income statistics for all college graduates who are year-round, full-time workers. The median salary of the male respondents was over $6,000 less than that for male college graduates who were year-round, full-time workers. These data are consistent with previous research that has shown that the white-minority income gap for males is higher than the white-minority income difference for females. The data also show that the gender gap in salary still exists even among highly educated individuals.

The scholarship had a major impact on the lives of our respondents. Two-fifths said that they could not have finished college without the scholarship. A black female social worker put it this way:

> I came from a family of 11 children, of which I am the tenth child. My parents farmed from place to place and the children were the main hands. My parents believed in education and wanted each of us to do our best. My parents were not able to send me to college. The Ford Foundation scholarship was a godsend, for without it, I would have never finished college.

Another quarter said that they could not have attended the college of their choice or that they would have taken longer to finish. A black female accounting supervisor said:

> The scholarship made a tremendous difference to me. It enabled me to go to the university of my choice. More importantly, however, it made me feel that somebody believed in my abilities and had given me a chance to achieve what I wanted to accomplish in life.

As this comment suggests, money was not the only thing that was important to these minority students. One-fifth of the respondents said that receiving the scholarship gave them a sense of confidence and self-esteem. A Puerto Rican female, now the education director of a major Hispanic organization, described it this way:

> Having been selected as a scholarship recipient also assisted in enhancing my self-esteem and self-image. It made me feel that someone felt that I was worthy enough to contribute to my education and development as a person. This gave me a deep sense of personal commitment and self-confidence. It also helped me to demonstrate to my younger brothers and sisters that with determination and persistence, a higher education is possible and that financial resources can be made available.

Many of those who did not receive the bachelor's degree were also strongly influenced by the scholarship and some are continuing their education. A black male, who was enrolled in Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University at the time of the survey, said:

> I regret that I was unable to complete my education [during the scholarship period]. I do have a sense of shame in that I would love to have completed my college career and to have my name and your scholarship made known to the public. Your Ford scholarship was a blessing to me from heaven.

The Telephone Survey of Matched Pairs

In order to learn more about the educational experiences of the Upper Division Scholarship recipients, we matched 24 scholarship recipients

who did not receive a bachelor's degree with comparable students who did receive the degree according to the following criteria: gender, race/ethnicity, parents' education and occupation, age, and community college major (Pincus and DeCamp forthcoming). Thirteen of the pairs were black, nine were Mexican American, and one each were Puerto Rican and American Indian. Fifteen of the pairs were male and nine were female, a reversal of the gender distribution of our larger sample. This is because men accounted for a disproportionate number of those who did not complete the bachelor's degree. We conducted telephone interviews with the respondents in the spring of 1988.[1]

The fact that the respondents were matched on a number of background characteristics that often influence educational attainment is somewhat unusual and makes it easier to isolate the educational experiences that might differentiate the graduates (i.e., those who received the bachelor's degree) from the nongraduates (those who did not receive the bachelor's degree). On the other hand, given the small number of pairs, generalization of the findings may be made only with great caution. The respondents are not representative of minority students generally, and may not even be representative of all UDS recipients who did not earn the bachelor's degree.

The Community College Experience

By and large, the graduates and nongraduates were quite similar when they entered community college. However, graduates were more likely than nongraduates to have been enrolled in a college preparatory track and to have graduated from high school with honors.[2] These results suggest that the nongraduates entered community college with somewhat weaker high school backgrounds and/or academic skills than the graduates.

1. We were unable to reach 12 of the recipients who did not earn a bachelor's degree. Ten had either moved or had unlisted phone numbers and did not respond to letters requesting them to call us collect. Two other students had not actually accepted the scholarship and were dropped from the study.

2. Unless otherwise mentioned, the graduate-nongraduate differences discussed in this paper are statistically significant. In this case, neither the difference in high school track nor in graduation with honors was statistically significant alone. When the two variables were combined into an index, however, the nongraduates were significantly less likely to have both been in the college preparatory track and graduate with honors than graduates.

Upon examining the community college experiences of the matched pairs, we also found that there were more similarities between the graduates and nongraduates than differences. Almost two-thirds of all respondents enrolled in community college within a year after high school graduation, but 10 percent waited more than six years to enroll. Most of the respondents were single (81.3 percent), childless (79.5 percent), and living with their parents (64.6 percent) when they enrolled in community college.

Almost 90 percent of the respondents enrolled full-time and most were either in the transfer track (62 percent) or the general track (29 percent). Fewer than 10 percent said that they had enrolled in a vocational program. Only one-fifth were required to take any remedial courses, and 80 percent of those who did took only one or two courses. Two-thirds of the respondents were employed. There were no graduate-nongraduate differences with respect to any of these variables.

Since previous research has shown that integration into the academic life of the community college is related to a student's academic success, we asked several questions about student experiences with counselors and advisers. Fewer than half of the students (42.6 percent) saw a guidance counselor regularly, a finding that is common among community college students. However, almost two-thirds of those who had regular contact with a counselor said that the counselor was helpful and encouraging in their decision to transfer. Over two-thirds of all respondents said that their community college instructors had been helpful and encouraging in their decision to transfer. Graduates were more likely to have received encouragement from their instructors than nongraduates (83.3 and 54.2 percent, respectively), but the two groups did not differ in their interactions with counselors.

We also asked several questions about the respondents' relationships with other students to determine the degree of social integration into the community college. Over half of the respondents (52.2 percent) said that their classmates were helpful and encouraging in their decision to transfer. More than two-thirds of the students were members of student clubs or organizations at their community college, a finding that is a dramatic departure from the more typical student who attends a few classes and then leaves campus. Of the respondents belonging to organizations, 35.3 percent were involved in student government or on some official school committee, while 32.4 percent were in a black or Hispanic organization. Graduates were more likely

to have been members of student organizations than nongraduates (83.3 percent to 54.2 percent), but the two groups did not differ in their perception of general student supportiveness. The high degree of student membership in organizations may not be typical of community college transfer students in general. In order to receive the scholarship, respondents had to be recommended by their colleges. Those who are active in student organizations, especially student government, are much more likely to come to the attention of the school administration than students who are not active. Although the scholarship requirements probably account in part for the high degree of organizational membership of our 48 respondents, they cannot explain the graduate-nongraduate differential.

Both groups of students were more highly integrated into the college, both academically and socially, than the typical community college student. The fact that graduates were more likely than nongraduates to have received encouragement from their instructors and to have been members of campus organizations suggests that they may have been more integrated into the college than nongraduates.

The Transfer Process

We were especially interested in the transfer process because we wanted to find out if graduates and nongraduates had different experiences. First, we asked respondents when they decided to transfer to a four-year college. Over two-fifths said that they knew they were going to transfer prior to entering community college, while the same number decided during the second half of their community college career. The graduates tended to decide earlier than the nongraduates but the difference fell just short of statistical significance.

When asked why they decided to transfer, the respondents gave a wide variety of reasons. The most common reason, "I wanted a four-year degree," was mentioned by 44 percent of the respondents. Twenty-two percent cited the Ford scholarship as the reason for transfer and 14 percent cited encouragement by the community college staff.

It appeared that the graduates and nongraduates had different motivations for transferring. Most of the graduates cited self-directed reasons for transferring, such as wanting the four-year degree, doing well in community college courses, and not liking the jobs available for associate degree holders. On the other hand, most of the non-

graduates gave non-self-directed reasons such as encouragement from college staff or other students and receiving the Ford scholarship or other financial aid.

Almost 90 percent of the respondents reported that they earned an associate degree from the community college and two-fifths said that they lost some credits when they transferred. Graduates were significantly more likely to have earned an associate degree and less likely to have lost credits than nongraduates.

More than three-quarters of the respondents transferred to public, four-year colleges. Although students mentioned a wide variety of reasons for selecting the school in which they enrolled, the most commonly mentioned first reason was the convenient location (36.4 percent). The school's general academic reputation or the reputation of the major department was cited by 13.6 percent of the students and the availability of supplemental financial aid was cited by another 13.6 percent.

Half of the nongraduates mentioned location as their first reason, compared to fewer than one-quarter of the graduates. Although important, a college's location is not an educational reason to select one school over another. Insofar as the student-institution fit is important to academic success, the nongraduates may have been short-changing themselves in the choice of schools. Whether this was due to poor planning, which is correctable, or to financial and family obligations, which are less correctable, is not clear.

The two groups of students did, in fact, show important differences in the transition from community to four-year college. When compared to nongraduates, the graduates were more likely to have had self-directed reasons for wanting to transfer, to have made nonpragmatic choices of four-year colleges, to have earned an associate degree, and to have had all their credits transferred. In addition, the graduates probably made an earlier decision to transfer than did the nongraduates. These findings clearly suggest that better transfer advisement and articulation agreements are essential.

The Four-Year College Experience

Although a majority of the respondents lived off campus when they transferred to a four-year college, 37.5 percent lived on campus. In spite of the fact that all the respondents had scholarships and attended college full time, almost three-fifths of them worked, most

part time. One-fifth of the students who worked were employed on campus. Since living and working on campus would help to integrate students into the college environment, we expected that graduates would be more likely than nongraduates to live and work on campus. The data, however, showed no differences between the two groups.

The respondents' contacts with four-year college counselors were similar to their contacts with community college counselors. Only two-fifths of the respondents said that they saw a counselor regularly. Of those students, 65 percent said that the counselor was helpful and encouraging. The respondents saw their four-year college instructors as less supportive than those in the community college. Less than half of the respondents said that their four-year college instructors were helpful and encouraging, a sharp drop from the two-thirds who reported their community college instructors as helpful. There were no graduate-nongraduate differences with respect to counselor or instructor interactions.

The two groups did differ, however, in their contacts with other students at the four-year institution. Graduates were significantly more likely than nongraduates to see other students as helpful and supportive (70.8 percent compared to 38.1 percent). Graduates were also more likely to belong to student organizations than nongraduates (54 percent compared to 30 percent). Respondents were less likely to have been a member of a student organization at the four-year college than at the community college. The type of student organization membership was also different. Academic interest groups were the most common type of membership group at the four-year college, followed by black/Hispanic groups and sports/recreational interest groups. Student government, which ranked in first place when respondents were in community college, ranked fourth at the four-year college. Once again, our data show that integration into the social life of the college is important for student success.

We also asked the nongraduates why they had not received the bachelor's degree. Job or business responsibilities was the most common reason cited (22.7 percent), followed by family and child care responsibilities (18.2 percent), financial problems (18.2 percent), personal problems (13.6 percent), and bad experiences in college (13.6 percent). The nongraduates, however, had not given up. In fact, two of the 24 students who did not have a bachelor's degree when they filled out the questionnaire in 1986 had received the degree by the time we interviewed them in 1988, and one of the two had even earned a master's degree. We decided to keep them in the nongrad-

uate category for the rest of the study but we excluded their responses to the above question. Fifteen of the 22 remaining nongraduates planned to get their degree in the future and 5 were enrolled in college at the time of our interview.

Our research has shown that the loss of credit upon transfer and the lack of social integration into the four-year college are two main factors that differentiate the graduates from the nongraduates. As Tinto (1987) has suggested, if the nongraduates had been more integrated into the four-year college, the problems they encountered might not have caused them to drop out.

Conclusion

In our sample of academically skilled minority students, the most important factor differentiating the graduates from the nongraduates was the degree of social integration into both the two-year and the four-year college. This supports Tinto's research (1987) and leads to a clear policy recommendation: Institutions of higher learning must help to create the conditions that promote the social integration of minority students.

Academic integration proved to be a less important issue in our study. This probably relates to the questions we asked and the high level of academic skill in our sample. Although there were no differences between the graduates and nongraduates in experiences with and perceptions of counseling, better counseling for the nongraduates could have helped to minimize credit loss, promote earlier planning for transfer, and encourage the completion of the bachelor's degree. Counseling and instructor support are probably even more important for the majority of minority community college students, who are less academically skilled and motivated than those in our sample.

Financial aid also emerged as an important issue. Although all 48 respondents received a major scholarship that paid up to 80 percent of the cost of tuition and other college expenses, a majority still found it necessary to work at a full-time or part-time job. One-third of the students said that without the scholarship they could not have gone to college at all or they could not have attended the college of their choice. In spite of the scholarship, four of the 24 nongraduates said that financial problems forced them to drop out of college, and 2 of the graduates said that they experienced financial problems while

attending the four-year college. If students are to succeed in community colleges and in four-year colleges, they must be freed of financial concerns and be allowed to spend as much time as possible pursuing their studies.

Before concluding, we want to emphasize how important getting the bachelor's degree was to the relative economic well-being of our matched pairs. Ninety-five percent of the graduates held professional and managerial jobs, compared to less than half of the nongraduates. The median salary for graduates was at least $10,000 more than that for nongraduates. Unfortunately, we did not ask for the respondents' salaries in 1988 and, therefore, had to rely on the 1986 results where "under $20,000" was the lowest category.

These differences are somewhat larger than expected. A recent federal report, for example, shows that black associate degree recipients have mean annual incomes that are almost $2,800 lower than black bachelor's degree recipients and $9,700 lower than master's degree recipients (Current Population Reports 1987). Since the presence or absence of a bachelor's degree made such a difference in a group of students who came from similar backgrounds and were educationally similar in the early 1970s, the transfer function of community colleges is still critically important to the mobility aspirations of minority students.

CHAPTER 4

Urban Community Colleges Transfer Opportunities Program

The Ford Foundation's Urban Community Colleges Transfer Opportunities Program (TOP) represented a major shift of focus in the Foundation's concern with declining minority transfer rates — from helping individual students transfer (the focus of the Upper Division Scholarship Program) to helping institutions enhance transfer opportunities for minority students.

Phase I

From its initiation, TOP was conceived as a two-phase national program with a three-fold purpose:

- to help selected community colleges improve minority transfer rates by remedying the structural flaws impeding the transfer function; by enhancing academic programs and support services; and by improving articulation, institutional data bases, and the provision of information about transfer
- to clarify understanding of the transfer process
- to publicize successful efforts.

During Phase I of TOP, 71 urban community colleges meeting specific criteria (public colleges with open admissions policies, offering

comprehensive academic programs, and with a student population at least one-third minority and low income) were invited to submit proposals describing activities for enhancing their institutions' transfer functions.

From 63 proposals received, 24 colleges were chosen in September 1983 to receive 10-month developmental grants. The 24 colleges selected ranged from older, larger colleges established as junior colleges to newer, smaller colleges established in the 1960s to serve inner-city minority and poor students. The colleges ranged from 45 percent to almost 100 percent minority, with minority women representing the major student constituency at most campuses.

Two major explanations for low minority transfer rates — one focusing on students, the other on institutions — were offered by the 24 Phase I colleges. Student-focused explanations revolved around student inadequacies, including poor basic skills, low aspirations, and need for support. Institutional explanations described inadequacies limiting the transfer function: lack of articulation with feeder high schools and four-year colleges; lack of identification of potential transfer students and lack of information in general about transfer opportunities; lack of support services enhancing the transfer function; and inadequate curriculums.

Strategies for Improving the Transfer Function

Given the aforementioned explanations for low minority transfer rates, the efforts of TOP participants to improve transfer opportunities can be divided into four basic strategies:

- better counseling and student-support services
- improved identification of potential transfer students and improved delivery of information about transfer to these students
- improved articulation from feeder high schools and to four-year institutions
- restructured and improved curriculums

Most of the 24 Phase I TOP projects focused on a mix of these strategies, but for many there was stronger emphasis on one or two strategies, often depending on how the problem of low minority transfer rates had been defined. Colleges offering student-focused

explanations of low minority transfer rates proposed counseling or student-support services as their major transfer-enhancing activity. Colleges offering explanations relating to institutional inadequacies proposed strategies aimed at improved articulation, improved identification of potential transfer students, and improved curriculums.

Those TOP colleges stressing improved counseling and support services focused on a number of components: a comprehensive orientation program emphasizing study skills, career planning, and community college organization; peer counseling; mentoring; transfer advisement; and basic skills tutoring. These colleges typically defined their activities as pilot programs and geared them to fairly small numbers of carefully selected students.

Strategies aimed at improving identification of potential transfer students — both at entry and at important subsequent matriculation points — and improved delivery of transfer information to these students involved the establishment of a pool of potential transfer students based on certain criteria, and the provision of transfer workshops and other transfer-related support services. This strategy, typically geared to large numbers of students, usually involved the use of computer-based student information systems.

Strategies that focused on improved articulation with senior colleges and with increasing the flow of high school students into community colleges involved negotiations with senior colleges to articulate course requirements and to establish equivalencies. Work with feeder high schools involved providing accelerated entry and honors programs, improved identification of potential transfer students before high school graduation, and college orientation programs.

Strategies that involved restructuring curriculum and faculty development typically involved an interdisciplinary approach to learning, the guaranteed offering of certain courses that would enhance a transfer student's options after transfer, and a writing-across-the-curriculum approach to skills improvement.

Phase II

Based on an evaluation of the overall effectiveness of TOP activities, their impact on the colleges, and the possibilities for institutionalization, nine colleges were invited to submit proposals for larger, three-year developmental grants. From these proposals, five colleges were

selected to develop demonstration projects to enhance transfer opportunities for urban community college students. The colleges selected were Community College of Philadelphia, Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, La Guardia Community College in New York City, Miami-Dade Community College in Miami, and South Mountain Community College in Phoenix. These five Phase II colleges emphasized the variety of different approaches to improving the transfer function.

From the start, the focus of TOP activities at Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) has been on changing the climate, specifically the academic environment, of the college in ways that would improve student skills and increase their ability to do college-level work. Central to this effort is the belief that, to increase minority transfer rates, it is not sufficient merely to add on transfer-enhancing activities and student-support services. Rather, it is crucial to identify and restructure those features of the community college that inhibit successful transfer. Specifically, it is necessary to change the structure and the style of pedagogy within the community college — to create a faculty culture that fosters transfer.

To further these goals, a transfer curriculum for full-time students was developed: two 12-credit-hour, interdisciplinary seminars (Introduction to the Humanities and Introduction to the Social Sciences) involving intensive writing and the close reading of primary texts, taught across the first year. A part-time sequence was offered in both day and evening divisions. A two-semester sequence of counseling activities has been integrated into these seminars. A series of interdisciplinary seminars to continue the work of the first-year seminars has been designed for the second year.

Faculty development has been central to the implementation of this transfer curriculum. A three-semester process has been established that involves faculty interaction before and during the seminars. TOP activities at CCP have also included efforts to improve identification of transfer students and to improve articulation with receiving institutions. Plans are under way to establish with Beaver College a joint summer program similar to the La Guardia–Vassar Summer Institute.

The focus of Cuyahoga Community College's (CCC) efforts to improve transfer rates has been the development of articulation agreements with four-year institutions. To date, detailed articulation agreements have been signed with four senior Ohio institutions. Linkages with eight historically black colleges are also planned in conjunction with the United Negro College Fund Transfer Articula-

tion Project. Perhaps the most significant result of TOP activities at CCC has been the creation of the Center for Articulation and Transfer Opportunities (CATO). The Center was established at the end of Phase I to promote the transfer function at the college, and many of the college's transfer-enhancing activities have been incorporated into it.

TOP activities at La Guardia Community College involve an institutionwide commitment to improved identification of potential transfer students and the provision of transfer information and transfer-enhancing support services to these students. These activities include:

- dual admissions arrangements with two four-year colleges under which letters of joint admission are sent to 55 percent of La Guardia's entering students;
- a Career and Transfer Resource Center, providing information about transfer procedures and offering transfer workshops and fairs;
- a number of data-based components designed to alert students to transfer opportunities and their own status in terms of requirements, including a Degree Requirements Checklist and a Transfer Information Guide;
- the High School Bridge Program, in which the college, in cooperation with the Board of Education, runs Middle College High School, a high school for potential dropouts located on the La Guardia campus;
- the development of complex articulation agreements with a number of private colleges, the chief of which is an agreement with Vassar College, with which the college runs the Vassar Summer Institute for students of both institutions;
- perhaps most important, the systematic incorporation of transfer information into the co-op education curriculums, thus targeting the majority of students as potential transfer students.

As at La Guardia, TOP activities at Miami-Dade Community College are comprehensive and involve a series of computer-based identification and advisement interventions. One of these is Advisement Graduation Information System, an individualized system giving each student detailed information about degree and transfer requirements. TOP activities at Miami-Dade have also included the institutionaliza-

tion of a college-survival course; the integration of TOP activities into many aspects of college life, including the Challenge Center (established to provide support and tutoring for black students), and the Change Center (set up to help women returning to school).

Perhaps most important is the collaboration of TOP staff in a number of ongoing academic activities designed to enhance transfer opportunities for minority students. Chief among these have been collegewide efforts to provide a series of skills improvement workshops to prepare students for the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST), a test all students must pass before they register as juniors anywhere in the state, and the Teacher/Learning Project, aimed at identifying and developing faculty behaviors and teaching styles fostering minority retention. TOP staff have also generated statewide conferences and studies designed to identify institutional barriers to minority transfer and to propose changes to reduce these barriers.

The TOP Phase II program at South Mountain Community College (SMCC) focuses on intensive student orientation and guidance. Activities include three major components—a College Orientation Program, a Mentoring Program, and a University Orientation Program—designed to create a pipeline for students from feeder high schools through SMCC and Arizona State University and to provide a continuum of support for these students. TOP activities at SMCC also include significant high school outreach. A college orientation course is offered at a number of feeder high schools and serves as a critical motivational tool for students unsure about college as an option.

Several courses promoting the transfer function have been institutionalized at SMCC as a result of TOP activities, including CPD 100, a college skills and orientation course with a transfer preparation component; Semantics, Logic for Writers, and Writing about Literature, a three-credit course offered to all potential transfer students formally enrolled in the Mentor Program; and University Adjustment and Survival, a three-credit course offered at Arizona State and open to transfer students to help them adjust to university life.

In addition to funding projects at these five colleges for three years, Phase II of TOP included a number of other activities involving 16 of the remaining 19 colleges. Ten colleges received grants ranging from $15,000 to $80,000. Three other colleges received small grants of $5,000 and five colleges (including two that received small grants) are working in a Ford-funded program with the Educational Testing Service to help develop their student information systems. Phase II also involved a number of other, more limited activities, each adding a new

dimension to the project and filling a perceived gap. These activities included a grant to NETWORKS at Bronx Community College to serve as a clearinghouse for transfer efforts nationwide, a grant to the Center for the Study of Community Colleges to study the arts curriculums in community colleges, and a grant to the University of South Carolina to study transfer rates for Hispanic students at six public community colleges in the Southwest. The total amount of money expended on TOP, Phase I and Phase II, was $2.2 million.

Conclusions

It is probably premature to draw any definitive conclusions about the impact of transfer-enhancing activities on minority transfer rates at the 24 TOP colleges or about the relative effectiveness of specific transfer-enhancing activities. Such attempts are complicated by the lack of consistent data, the different use of terminology at various institutions, and the difficulty of disaggregating the effects of TOP activities from the effects of other institutional transfer-enhancing activities. Indeed, for many involved with community colleges and with TOP specifically, the major benefit of TOP was not that any specific transfer-enhancing activity proved more effective than others, but that TOP focused attention on the transfer function as one of the main responsibilities of the community college.

Still, from the TOP experience, certain insights have emerged about ways to improve transfer rates for minority students, about what the institutions involved managed to do well, and in what areas improvement is needed.

Above all, the transfer function must be seen as an institutional responsibility requiring a systemwide response and involving a wide range of interventions — administrative, supportive, and academic. While the establishment of a permanent transfer office or the incorporation of a transfer counselor within an existing office is an important step toward legitimizing transfer activities, it is not likely to bring about improved minority transfer rates in the absence of other institutionwide activities and, equally important, in the absence of commitment to the transfer function on the part of institutional leadership.

It is also vital that transfer activities be perceived as a continuum involving academic and student-support services from preentry to

postgraduation, and not merely as a set of discrete components—an orientation course here, a transfer workshop there, and so forth. The components of such a transfer continuum, as defined in one of the final evaluations of Phase I colleges as a comprehensive model (AED 1985), include:

a. High school outreach and recruitment and bridge programs which connect high school and junior high school students and faculty with the community college, to establish a transfer track and to increase minority enrollment.
b. Identification at entry of potential transfer students through formal procedures at registration, assessment, orientation, or initial counseling.
c. Establishment of a data base that permits systematic tracking, follow-up, and intervention for all potential transfer students, and encourages regular evaluation of transfer interventions and feedback from students.
d. Transfer counseling through identified counselors or staff members, at specified sites where transfer information is readily available.
e. Transfer courses and workshops designed to provide information as part of the curriculum and to help students prepare for upper division work.
g. Curriculum development of honors programs, transfer-track courses, or basic skills improvement programs that help students prepare for upper-division work.
h. Mentoring and peer support programs designed to engage faculty or successful students in consistently supporting potential transfer students.
i. Articulation agreements with four-year institutions; to clarify and simplify the academic progress of potential transfer students.
j. Recruitment and support programs organized by senior colleges to increase the enrollment of transfer students and sustain their enrollment at four-year institutions.

This comprehensive model is clearly an ideal. Not all institutions are able to mobilize sufficient resources to implement all components of the model, but it can serve as a framework for assessing an insti-

tution's transfer activities. Judged against this model, most TOP programs successfully implemented many of the components:

High school outreach: Most TOP programs developed outreach to local high schools, although efforts should be intensified and reach into the early high school and even junior high school years. Increasing precollege remediation, helping students articulate academic and career goals earlier, and more financial aid arrangements and guarantees would be desirable.

Student-support services: Most colleges provided substantial student-support services encouraging transfer, including transfer workshops and courses, transfer counseling, peer counseling, mentoring, and skills remediation.

Improved articulation agreements: Most TOP programs established articulation agreements with four-year institutions, but more such work is necessary. While developing individual agreements between institutions is costly and time-consuming, detailed agreements are vital, especially between colleges within a given system, and between colleges that are proximate or between which a history of transfer exists.

Most TOP programs were less successful in implementing other components of the comprehensive model:

Identification of potential transfer students at entry: This is crucial to encourage transfer and is linked to building an effective data base. Currently, most data bases are designed to report enrollment and financial aid information for district or state purposes, not to allow the identification, tracking, and delivery of support services to students. More powerful data base management systems are a vital part of transfer enhancement. Such systems can improve targeting of potential transfer students, delivery of information regarding academic status and transfer possibilities, and evaluation of transfer efforts. Without the capacity to extract information about student goals, programs, and progress, most college data bases will continue to frustrate attempts to provide effective intervention strategies.

The identification of potential transfer students at entry could be viewed negatively as involving sorting. While this is a serious concern, it can be avoided if two conditions are met. First, "potential transfer student" must be broadly defined—all students who enter with a certain grade-point average, for example; or, as in the case of La Guardia, the majority of students can be treated as potential transfers and given information about transfer possibilities on entry. Second, there must be mechanisms for identifying potential students after entrance—students who have improved scholastically, for example, or who express an interest in transfer after a year in school.

Improved evaluation: This is also vital, both in determining if transfer rates do actually increase and for whom, and in determining what kinds of activities are the most effective at a given institution. Another important question is whether transfer-enhancing activities become institutionalized after funding ceases.

Curriculum and faculty development: This is a transfer-enhancing intervention that is still relatively unexplored at most TOP colleges. Such activities seek to do more than fill in the perceived gaps in the transfer function. They seek to make major changes in the culture of community colleges, in much the same way as the "effective" schools movement seeks to change public schools. These activities represent a significant departure from the community college's recent emphasis on community education and on the needs of adults not in the educational pipeline. Such efforts represent a valuable transfer-enhancing intervention, not only because they improve transfer rates for some students, but because they help all students involved, even if they do not wish to transfer or ultimately are unable to do so.

Supports at four-year institutions: Senior colleges do not offer an easy adjustment to many community college students. While courses to lessen transfer shock are clearly a first step, much more is needed, given certain barriers at senior institutions that impede academic and social success for minority students in particular. Whatever can be done to

change senior colleges' policies and procedures, especially in the areas of academic guidance, financial aid, and housing, will do much to increase the overall retention rates of transfer students at these institutions.

Finally, perhaps the most important lesson of the TOP experience has been that the transfer function is a complex issue affected by a multiplicity of factors, many beyond the scope of individual institutions. If, for example, more financial aid were available, or transfer bounties existed, as recommended in Chapter 1, minority transfer rates would probably improve. And if, as in Florida, there were more mechanisms fostering transfer at the state level, some specific transfer-enhancing activities, detailed articulation agreements between individual colleges, for example, would be less vital. Clearly, concerned institutions must encourage transfer-enhancing policies at the state level if transfer rates for minorities are to improve.

TOP was the centerpiece of the Ford Foundation's efforts to strengthen the academic capacities and transfer opportunities of institutions serving large numbers of minority and low-income students. As such, it underscored the role of the community college as the entry point into the system of higher education for millions of nontraditional and new immigrant students. If the community college is to continue this role and if the promise of the community college is to be real, continued transfer-enhancing activities, both within individual institutions and statewide, are clearly vital.

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Los Angeles City College
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State Community College
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West Los Angeles College

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